



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***MIXED MICROALGAE CULTIVATED IN OUTDOOR OPEN POND
SYSTEM UNDER VARIABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS***

TUNKU AINNA BINTI TUNKU AZMIR SHAH

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SYSTEM UNDER VARIABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS**

By

TUNKU AINNA BINTI TUNKU AZMIR SHAH

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science**

June 2016

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science

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June 2016

Chairman : Hishamuddin Bin Omar, PhD
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Microalgae are known for its ability to be potential biofuel substituting fossil fuel and as a biomitigation strategy to eliminate excessive amount of carbon dioxide within earth's atmosphere. Mixed microalgae biodiversity acts as a synthetic ecosystem. Variant species mutually exploits complementary metabolic activities which are used for algal growth, survival and reproduction. This study utilizes mixed microalgae growth (eutrophication) from tilapia fish pond and benefiting the algae for its latent potentials; as a promising alternative for not only fuel, but also animal feed and food supplement. The objectives of this research are; to determine the productivity and the Specific Growth Rate (SGR), to examine the algal succession and species identification, to quantify the biochemical composition (%) and toxicity of the harvested mixed microalgae throughout three different weather conditions during the cultivation process.

Productivity and Specific Growth Rate of the mixed microalgae was deliberated via three independent analysis; optical density (680nm), biomass dry weight, and chlorophyll *a*. The estimation of species concentration (%) was using the Neubauer counting slide and visualized via Olympus BH2 light microscope at 400× and 1000× magnification. Most diatoms and dinoflagellates were identified to species level with the aid of algal taxonomy reference book. Biochemical quantification that was conducted were; soluble protein, Bradford method; carbohydrate, Soluble carbohydrate method; and lipid, modified Bligh and Dyer method. The toxicity analysis was performed by exposing Brine Shrimp (*Artemia nauplii*) to extracted mixed microalgae as toxicant.

An optimization of the algal concentration (mixed microalgae/tap water) % v/v was conducted as preliminary study. Due to good increment in algal growth, two of the highest productivity and SGR; 50 % v/v and 75 % v/v was then cultured in three weather conditions; rainy weather; culture faced rainfall throughout culture period, mixed weather; culture only faced rainfall during several days of culture period, and sunny weather; culture did not face rainfall throughout culture period. The highest productivity; $0.04 \pm 0.00 \text{ g L}^{-1} \text{ d}^{-1}$ and Specific Growth Rate; $0.21 \pm 0.02 \mu \text{ d}^{-1}$ documented was from Treatment 2; 75% v/v algal concentration cultured during sunny weather condition. Throughout the 30 days of cultivation (3 complete weather conditions); 4 species were identified during rainy season, 8 species during mixed weather condition and 12 species during sunny weather conditions. Several species did exist predominantly during all three weather conditions, thus, bringing the total number of 13 identified species. Biochemical analyses quantified the highest protein content (%); 46.88 ± 0.23 , carbohydrate content (%); 31.36 ± 0.21 and lipid content (%); 29.41 ± 0.24 which was all cultured via Treatment 2 during sunny weather condition. The toxicity analysis proved that the cultured mixed microalgae are suitable for consumption with the LD_{50} value; 59.33 % when it was exposed to 30 mg L^{-1} of extracted mixed microalgae which is considered non toxic. Sufficient sunlight irradiation, optimum culture conditions, combined with effective ambient state will generate high algal productivity with infinite potentials. However, the insights on mixed microalgae cultivation and other factors influencing the process could be conducted in future to examine the efficiency of the culture at various treatment levels.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Sarjana Sains

MIKROALGA CAMPURAN YANG DIKULTUR DALAM SISTEM KOLAM TERBUKA DALAM PELBAGAI JENIS CUACA

Oleh

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Mikroalga terkenal dengan keupayaan untuk menjadi biofuel, menggantikan bahan api fosil dan juga digunakan dalam strategi untuk biomitigasi lebihan karbon dioksida yang terkandung dalam atmosfera bumi. Kepelbagaian jenis spesis dalam mikroalga campuran bertindak sebagai ekosistem sintetik. Aneka spesis saling mengeksploitasi dan melengkapi aktiviti metabolit yang digunakan untuk pertumbuhan, survival dan pembiakan alga. Kajian ini menggunakan eutrofikasi alga dari kolam ikan talapia, mengambil manfaat daripadanya dan mengenali potensi alga untuk bukan sahaja menjadi alternatif biofuel, malah ianya boleh menjadi makanan haiwan dan makanan tambahan manusia. Objektif kajian ini adalah; untuk mengetahui produktiviti dan kadar pertumbuhan spesifik; untuk memeriksa diversiti dan mengenal pasti spesis alga, untuk mengkuantifikasi komposisi biokimia dan ketoksikan alga campuran yang telah dikultur dan dituai sepanjang tiga jenis cuaca.

Produktiviti dan kadar pertumbuhan spesifik telah diuji menggunakan tiga jenis analisis iaitu; ketumpatan optik (680nm), berat kering biomas, dan klorofil *a*. Anggaran kepekatan spesis telah diukur menggunakan slaid pengiraan Nebauer dan alga campuran yang dikultur telah divisualkan menggunakan mikroskop bercahaya Olympus BH2 pada kadar pembesaran 400× dan 1000×. Kebanyakan diatom dan dinoflagellate telah dikenal pasti pada tahap spesis dengan menggunakan buku rujukan taksonomi alga. Analisis komposisi biokimia yang telah dijalankan adalah; protein terlarut, kaedah Bradford; karbohidrat, kaedah karbohidrat terlarut; dan lipid, kaedah Bligh dan Dyer yang telah diubahsuai. Analisis kadar ketoksikan telah diuji dengan cara mendedahkan ekstrak alga kepada udang air garam (*Artemia nauplii*).

Satu kajian telah dijalankan terlebih dahulu, dimana campuran kepekatan alga dan air telah diuji. Berdasarkan hasil dari kajian awal, dua kepekatan telah menunjukkan hasil produktiviti dan kadar pertumbuhan alga tertinggi iaitu 50 % v/v dan 75 % v/v dan ianya telah dipilih untuk dikultur sepanjang kajian ini. Proses pengkulturan telah dibuat pada tiga jenis cuaca; hujan; dimana kultur mengalami hujan pada setiap hari sepanjang proses pengkulturan, cuaca campuran; dimana kultur hanya mengalami hujan untuk beberapa hari sepanjang proses pengkulturan, dan cuaca cerah; dimana kultur tidak mengalami hujan sepanjang proses pengkulturan. Kadar produktiviti tertinggi; $0.04 \pm 0.00 \text{ g L}^{-1} \text{ d}^{-1}$ dan kadar pertumbuhan tertinggi; $0.21 \pm 0.02 \mu \text{ d}^{-1}$ yang telah direkod adalah daripada kultur yang menggunakan kepekatan 75 % v/v semasa cuaca cerah. Sepanjang tempoh 30 hari dari proses pengkulturan (untuk tiga jenis cuaca); 4 jenis spesis telah dikenal pasti semasa cuaca hujan, 8 jenis spesis telah dikenal pasti semasa cuaca campuran dan 12 jenis spesis telah dikenal pasti semasa cuaca cerah. Beberapa spesis wujud semasa ketiga-tiga jenis cuaca, menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan 13 spesis yang telah dikenalpasti. Berdasarkan analisis biokimia, kandungan protein tertinggi (%); 46.88 ± 0.23 , kandungan karbohidrat (%); 31.36 ± 0.21 dan kandungan lipid (%); 29.41 ± 0.24 iaitu kesemuanya telah dikultur menggunakan kepekatan 75 % v/v semasa cuaca cerah. Ujian ketoksikan membuktikan alga campuran yang telah dikultur adalah sesuai untuk dimakan. Apabila *Artemia nauplii* didedahkan kepada ekstrak alga campuran 30 mg L^{-1} , nilai LD_{50} ialah 59.33 % dan ianya dianggap tidak toksik.

Apabila kultur mendapat sinaran cahaya matahari yang mencukupi, keadaan kultur yang optimum, dan digabungkan dengan keadaan sekeliling yang kondusif akan menghasilkan produktiviti mikroalga campuran yang tinggi dengan potensi tidak terbatas. Walaubagaimanapun, pengkulturan mikroalga campuran dan faktor-faktor lain yang mempengaruhi proses ini boleh dikaji dengan lebih lanjut pada masa akan datang untuk mengetahui dengan lebih mendalam jenis aspek yang mempengaruhi kadar pertumbuhan alga jika kondusi persekitaran kultur diubah.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

g	grams
mg	milligram
L	litre
mL	millilitre
°C	degree Celcius
μmol	micromol
m	meter
mm	millimeter
cm	centimeter
nm	nanometer
MPa	megapascal
s	second
min	minutes
d	days
v	volume
rpm	rotation per minute
sp.	species
%	percent
CO ₂	carbon dioxide
LD ₅₀	Lethal Dose ₅₀
UV	ultraviolet
SE	standard error

SPSS

Statistical Package for Social for the Social Science

ANOVA

Analysis of Variance



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The world at present is facing a serious climate problem. Greenhouses gases such as CO₂ and CH₄ released to the earth's atmosphere as the results of everyday living, will form an invisible blanket which traps heat thus causing gradual warming of the Earth. Apart from global warming, air pollution from industrial and vehicular emissions indirectly causes water pollution. Apart from that, domestic and industrial effluent, raw sewage, deforestation and other human activities also deteriorate natural and manmade water bodies. Environmental pollution created by human hosts other problems associated with environmental degradation which will lead to malnutrition due to soil depletion and insufficiency of fertile agriculture crop. These conditions could be worse if there are no control measures taken.

These predicaments could be reduced with the aid of microalgae cultivation. Combination of CO₂ fixation, biofuel production, and wastewater treatment may provide a very promising alternative to current CO₂ mitigation strategies. The age of cheap petroleum will end when crude oil reserve exhausted in near future. According to analysts, at the present rate of consumption, the fossil fuel reserves will be exhausted within just 50 years (Rodolfi et al., 2009). Microalgae have the potential to emerge as an unconventional sustainable resource because of their neutrality towards natural environment and flexible cultivation (Chen et al., 2015). Microalgae have the ability to convert sunlight, carbon dioxide, water and inorganic fertilizers into useful products such as proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, pigments, vitamins, and the oxygen released from algal cultivation could be used as biomitigation strategy in eliminating excessive amount of CO₂ within earth's atmosphere. Their commercial potential has attracted the attention of biochemists, microbiologists, chemical engineers, and most recently, entrepreneurs.

The enrichment of water bodies will cause accelerated growth of algae which produce undesirable disturbance to the balance of organism present in the water and the quality of water is concerned. Eutrophication will boost the growth of microalgae resulting in reduced water clarity and increased biological oxygen demand and the reduced dissolved oxygen will cause death to aquatic organisms. However, increased microalgae productivity due to eutrophication could have positive outcomes which are often overlooked. These microalgal blooms can be harvested and the biomass can be converted and utilized into human food, animal feed, source of fine chemicals (astaxanthin, beta carotene, and chlorophyll) and also biofuel. The irony is that despite of its potential, most

scientist and common people look at microalgae bloom as environmental problem. However, by exploiting mixed microalgae culture derived from eutrophication may be an alternative solution for water contamination, which will then have the capacity for commercialization (Venkata Mohan et al., 2011).

On the opposite side of microalgae bloom as a form of pollution, mainstream research on microalgae as potential water bioremediator, CO₂ sequestration, biomass production and biofuel emphasizes more on laboratory approach. Most efforts are dedicated to find specific microalgae species and finding suitable biomass production protocol for biofuel, culture studies, and algae as carbon source in growth media (Mutanda et al., 2011). Although few species were found suitable for cultivation but scaling up to mass production level and contamination still a major issue. The crisis with pure culture is contamination that transpires because of open pond system that could not be controlled compared to photobioreactor systems. Cost of culturing monospecies in those systems is still prohibitively expensive. Due to this circumstance, limitations exist in many researches and predicaments arise where they are unable to produce in large scale and contaminations would occur in large batches of microalgae production.

The appeal of microalgae is that sunlight energy and carbon sources could be substituted for the expensive fermentable substrates required in industrial microbiology. Even when using controlled closed system fermenters (photobioreactor), contaminations could only take place in prolonged periods of fermentation. Positively, mixed microalgae could be cultivated in an open pond system at a very low cost due to the usage of naturally available sunlight and CO₂. It is also more practical, easily maintain and low capital input which offset its high productivity. Ecosystems with greater number of species are more stable and more resilient to change than monoculture systems made up of just one crop (Kazamia et al., 2012).

The leads of this study are; the low capital investment, low capital expenditure, the robust growth mixed microalgae culture in changing culture conditions and the algal diversity that it offers. Changing culture conditions is quite prominent due to geographical location of Malaysia which is 3°N approaching the equator line. Malaysia has no definite seasons like monsoon or temperate. However, Malaysia experience weather conditions changes such as sunny, rainy and mixed weather (sunny and rainy). Algae species within the mixed microalgae culture may experience diversity fluctuation due to these weather changes. As the results, there will be different dominant species occurring during different times throughout cultivation period. Advantages of commissioning microalgal cultures over agricultural systems are the very high yields of photosynthetic efficiencies and the usage of saline waters and marginal lands. The ability to

manipulate the metabolism of microalgae through control of the environment may result in appealing outcome (Benemann and Tillett, 2009).

The objectives of this study are;

- i. to measure the productivity and the Specific Growth Rate (SGR) of mixed microalgae cultured in outdoor open pond system based on optical density, dry weight and chlorophyll *a*.
- ii. to examine the algal succession and species identification of mixed microalgae cultured in outdoor open pond system,
- iii. to proximate the biochemical composition and the toxicity of the harvested mixed microalgae throughout three different weather conditions during the cultivation process.

Thus, by using mixed microalgae, understanding the ecosystem via observation and close monitoring, will promote microalgae growth and production in outdoor variable weather conditions.

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